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Featured Highlight

Rev. Dr. Geoffrey Black Visits SEC

United Church of Christ President Continues Listening Tour With Stop in Atlanta – Feb. 5-7.

Rev. Geoffrey Black, of the United Church of Christ continues ten stop national listening tour visiting UCC conferences around the U.S. Next on agenda is the Southeast Conference beginning in Pleasant Hill, TN and then Atlanta and Stone Mountain, GA.

The recently elected General Minister and President, Rev. Geoffrey Black, of the United Church of Christ (UCC) continues a ten stop national listening tour visiting UCC conferences around the United States. Next on his agenda is the Southeast Conference (SEC), made up of Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee, and the panhandle of Florida. The Rev. Black's southeast tour will begin in Pleasant Hill, TN and continue on to Atlanta, GA and Stone Mountain, GA. The Rev. Black has taken to the road in an effort to hear first-hand from the diverse groups across the UCC.



The United Church of Christ elected Rev. Geoffrey A. Black General Minister and President in June of 2009. Prior to that, he served as Conference Minister of the UCC's New York Conference for nine years. He also served as the pastor of local congregations, a university chaplain, and was on the staff of the UCC Office for Church Life and Leadership. He is a graduate of Lincoln University and Yale Divinity School. His ecumenical commitment, concern for equal justice, African-American empowerment, and community improvement have shaped Black's ministry in the church and in the communities in which he has lived.

During recent listening tours, Rev. Black emphasized the theme of open communications by asking, "How is God calling us to better shape the United Church of Christ with an expectation that God's spirit is moving among us?" Black comes to the Southeast Conference eager to hear what its people have to say.

The geographically dispersed SEC is rich in transformation and innovation. "The Southeast Conference is the mission field for the church, a unique area with greatest possibility for growth," states Rev. Timothy Downs, SEC Conference Minister. The conference strives to stay in front and remain connected with its five states via new emerging technology.

Center for Progressive Renewal (CPR). The Rev. Black will serve on the advisory board for the Center. One of the Center's co-directors is the Rev. Cameron Trimble, currently an Associate Conference Minister for the Southeast Conference, who was recently named CEO and Executive Director of CPR. The Center will serve existing and future UCC congregations. It will be an independent, non-profit organization. "This ... gives us the means to build partnerships with other denominations. The center will return to a proven strategy: that healthy congregations give birth to new congregations," states Trimble.

On deepening ecumenical partnerships the Rev. Black has commented, "You've heard that 'necessity is the mother of invention'? Necessity may also be the mother of ecumenical partnership. Most of our ecumenical partners ... are facing the same kind of challenges as we are in the UCC." Churches today are looking at hard times. The UCC is striving to be faithful to God's call in economically



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challenging times, when the numbers of members in mainline denominations are continuing to decrease. "There is definitely a need for a church like ours. We are a small denomination but we are an important voice in the life of this country. I am a firm believer that this church has a future. We just need to reach out and take hold of it," states Rev. Black.

The schedule for Rev. Black's stay in the Southeast Conference is as follows:

- Friday, February 5th / 5:00pm Pleasant Hill Community UCC, Pleasant Hill, TN
Pleasant Hill Community will host a potluck dinner in Rev. Black's honor. The dinner and following meeting will be open to all area UCC members.
- Saturday, February 6th
Atlanta, GA Rev. Black will meet with some of the SEC key leaders who are deeply involved in its educational ministries and extension work through new church starts.
- Sunday, February 7th / 8:30am
Victory Church, UCC, Stone Mountain, GA
Rev. Black will bring greetings to Victory at their early service.
- Sunday, February 7th / 10:00am
First Congregational UCC, Atlanta, GA Join us in worship as the Rev. Black preaches the Sunday sermon.
- Sunday, February 7th / 2:00pm
Central Congregational UCC, Atlanta, GA
Rev. Black will host a Listening Session, open to the public to respond to questions and concerns of members of the United Church of Christ from across the conference.

Haiti Earthquake Appeal



Donate Now to Provide Emergency Relief in Haiti.

The United Church of Christ has launched an emergency appeal for Haiti after a major earthquake struck the country. Thousands of people are feared dead and countless have been left homeless.

Global Ministries personnel, **Kim, Patrick and Solomon**

Bentrott have reported in they are safe. As damage assessments are made and plans for relief, recovery and rehabilitation are developed, additional support will be shared. The need is massive. Updates will be posted at:

<http://www.ucc.org/disaster/>

The quake, measuring 7.0 on the Richter scale, struck 10 miles southwest of the capital just before 5pm local time on January 12.

It is still too early to know the full extent of the damage, but **One Great Hour of Sharing** is expecting very high loss of life, widespread destruction of homes, schools and other buildings, and major damage to key water, electricity and road systems.

One Great Hour of Sharing funds are being rushed to our Haitian partners to support their initial emergency response. As damage assessments are made and plans for relief, recovery and rehabilitation are developed, additional support will be shared. The need is massive.

How You Can Help:

1. Pray for the people of Haiti their leaders and emergency and humanitarian aid workers.
2. Please help the people of Haiti by sending gifts payable to your congregation marked for "OGHS - Haiti Earthquake Relief" with the request they be sent

through your Conference office on to Wider Church Ministries.

3. Send gifts, made out to Wider Church Ministries and marked in the memo portion "OGHS - Haiti Earthquake Relief" to Wider Church Ministries; 700 Prospect Avenue, Cleveland, OH 44115.

OR

Make a secure online donation to the OGHS International Disaster Relief fund.<https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Donation2?df_id=1234&1234.donation=form1>

Thank you for your compassion and support.

Peace,

Susan

Susan M. Sanders

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Six Churches from the Southeast Conference join in a work camp at Back Bay Mission, Biloxi



Twenty-six individuals from six UCC churches in the Southeast Conference gathered in Biloxi, Mississippi in November to experience and share God's love. The team rehabbed homes, cooked and served at Loaves and Fishes soup kitchen, distributed food and clothing at the Mission office, and helped Back Bay prepare & wrap Christmas gift items for the homeless and other needy men, women, and children on the Gulf Coast. Members of the group

marveled at the sense of community that could bind together such a diverse group. Led by Connie and Bob Waidmann, Disaster Relief Coordinators for the Southeast Conference, the work camp was an expression of the DART (Disaster Assistance Relief Team) Ministries of the Conference.

Robert Ahrendt of Pleasant Hill wrote, "Often through the years people have asked - How can you believe in a God you cannot see? Well, I know we saw what God looks like on the week of work camp. God looks like the 26 people from different age, ethnic, racial, educational, talent and skill level, sexual orientation, interest, financial levels and religious backgrounds that were part of this weeklong work camp. God's hands look like blisters and paint, broken fingernails, other body parts bruised and all over-exhausted."

Some of the group worked on the home of an elderly couple in hopes of getting them back into it before Christmas. Several other homes were brought closer to completion. One of these is for an elderly woman who fishes with a net each day to give food to her neighbors and the other for a single mother of three children. It was a joy to meet and talk with the residents of the homes where the group worked. They shared their love and gratitude with members of our conference in many ways.

Other work camp activities included Wednesday night worship at a neighborhood Missionary Baptist church, a tour of the devastation and rebuilding in New Orleans, and fun evenings of cards and conversation.

Team members were from around the Conference. Churches from Atlanta included **First Congregational United Church of Christ, Open Community Church UCC, and Praxis UCC, all in the Atlanta area.** Churches from Tennessee included **Church of the Savior UCC, Knoxville; Holy Trinity Community UCC, Nashville; and Pleasant Hill Community Church UCC, Pleasant Hill.**